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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Statement submitted by the Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Documentation, Research and Information, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* E/2004/100 and Corr.1 and Corr.2.

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The Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Documentation, Research and Information (doCip) wishes to add its voice to that of indigenous people worldwide on the subject of the review of mechanisms, procedures and programmes concerning indigenous people undertaken pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/22 and the relevant report of the Secretary-General (E/2003/72).

The Working Group is essential for the further development of indigenous issues within the United Nations. As a body generally open to all peoples and dedicated to the elaboration of international standards for the protection of the rights of indigenous people, it cannot be replaced by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, whose mandate is to provide the Council with information and advice on indigenous issues and to coordinate relevant activities. The work of the Permanent Forum focuses on implementation, whereas the Working Group is concerned with drafting international legal standards. Lastly, the mandates of the two Special Rapporteurs (on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people and on indigenous peoples' permanent sovereignty over natural resources) are also distinct from that of the Working Group.

Both the United Nations and the European Union have recognized this in the positions taken on a number of occasions, as reflected by, inter alia, the recommendation contained in paragraph 85 of the report on the second session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, resolutions 2003/55 and 2004/57 of the Commission on Human Rights and resolution 2002/17 of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

Furthermore, in the first report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on this issue, all the indigenous organizations expressing their views were in favour of maintaining the Working Group. Their stance is consistent with the declaration and recommendations made by their umbrella organization, the Indigenous Peoples' Caucus, which adopted that same position by consensus, and with the position of the 13 indigenous non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council that spoke on this issue at the Council's substantive session in 2003.

Lastly, a member of the European Parliament has submitted to the Secretary-General a letter pointing out that, pursuant to paragraph 15 of motion for a resolution B5-0050/2004, the Parliament is also in agreement.

doCip believes that abolishing the Working Group on Indigenous Populations would amount to wasting over 25 years of work within the United Nations for which States and, above all, many indigenous delegations have made considerable sacrifices.